

FCC 96-382

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Before the

Federal Communications Commission

DOCKET FILE COPY ORIGINAL

Washington, D.C.

In the Matter of )  
Implementation of Section 255 of the )  
Telecommunications Act of 1996 )  
 ) WTDocket No. 96-198  
Access to Telecommunications Services, )  
Telecommunications Equipment, and )  
Customer Premises Equipment )  
By Persons with Disabilities )  
 )

Notice of Inquiry

Adopted: Released:  
September 17, September 19, 1996  
1996

Comment Date: October 28, 1996

Reply Comment Date: November 27, 1996

October 30, 1996

Dear FCC;

In the above docket I wish to supply my comments, concerning billing for directory assistance by Telephone Service carriers. I also wish to offer comments on making systems more accessible to the disabled.

I am a person who has dealt with and helped disabled persons myself including a number of years with my own disability. During this time my friends and myself have used services by a local telephone service provider (Pacific Bell/Pac Bell) which has been mandated by the Calif Public Utilities Commission to provide Life-Line services as well as services for the deaf/disabled. My disabled friend and I have visited Pac Bell's disabled services office in Berkeley, Ca as well as my trying as an Electrical Engineer to make things more accessible to her and others.

1) My first comment concerns Access to Telecommunications Services, the charges for directory assistance by alternate carriers. While not discriminatory when compared to other able bodied persons I feel that alternate carriers should develop a mechanism like Pac Bell and AT&T that remove charges for directory assistance for the Blind or Disabled. **Before the FCC's breakup** of the Telephone system by splitting AT&T into regional operating companies, and long distance from AT&T and other competing companies, the telephone services bill came as one bill where **directory assistance charges were removed or reduced for the disabled after certification by doctors**. NOW, with many independent alternative services, I have noted that the services I selected for long distance does a respectful job of discounting long distance services, BUT PROVIDES NO AID or discount to DIRECTORY ASSISTANCE. That has resulted in our using directory assistance via their system and being stuck with atrocious charges!

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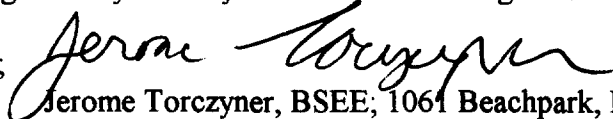
As I have mentioned both Pac Bell and AT&T have provided for removal of charges for the blind/disabled as the attached Bill From VARTEC shows a charge of 85 cents for what is very likely less than ten second of help. We don't know where the charges originate but feel they are excessive. Apparently there is no required discount tariff for disabled persons like from Pac Bell or AT&T. The attached VARTEC 8/13/96 bill shows two occasions when directory assistance was used and EACH TIME \$0.85 was charged! This charge for a few seconds of help is FAR GREATER than the dime a minute long distance charge! My concern on this matter resulted in my calls to VARTEC, Pac Bell, AT&T, and the Calif Public Utilities Commission (PUC) to learn that there is no requirement or Tariff requiring a discount! VARTEC says they have no mechanism for a discount and there is no requirement for such. I find myself going to a Pac Bell or AT&T phone where there is no charge for directory assistance and then returning to the VARTEC connected phone.

The attached recent bill was prior to my realizing these charges. Here a Directory assistance call of 7/11/96 and 8/4/96 can be noted. VARTEC provided no discount, and only upon my call to Pac Bell did they charge back VARTEC 2x\$0.85 for the Misc Charge refund of \$1.70 shown 8/7/96! Some mechanism is needed to make alternative carriers also provide for Directory Assistance by the disabled! At the same time the VARTEC add says in the center, "If for any reason you are ever charged more than 10 cents a minute using the dimline service ... VARTEC will refund .. The entire cost of the call." - This has gotten too complicated to pursue, but we feel that this outrageous 85 cent charge to a disabled user should be removed, rather than having to deal with Pac Bell to charge back the Directory Assistance charge! If AT&T can cooperate why can't VARTEC? We believe these carriers should provide or make an accommodation for use of their service by disabled persons. We hope the FCC may include this in future regulations.

2) Another comment concerning the Customer Premises Equipment telephone equipment itself, is that we have noted large button phones, phones operated by touch pad, sip-N-puff systems, wheelchair/head movement mechanisms and similar that provide an halfway usable telephone access method. And yet we have used alternative phones with a dialing mechanism by use of a voice dialing mechanism. That has helped partially in simplifying the requirement for button pushing, but still requires the holding of a handset. With the existence of touchpad memory dialing phone and the existence of LARGE BUTTON PHONES, and SPEAKER PHONES, we would look forward to a MEMORY DIALING VOICE COMMANDED PHONE. Such features exist but not in combination! Perhaps, the units could be created, with minor amounts of development costs, or perhaps similar to existing TDD charges on every bill they could developed by a company or via a consortium of companies. THEN THE DISABLED WOULD BE TRULY FREE! Perhaps also remote control like the X10 or power house system could be included! This would be newer uptodate equipment!

3) Finally, I wish to hope that future technologies would provide for disabled persons. Make sure any future HDTV/ATV type system INITIALLY provides access NOT AT A LATER DATE like in the addition of subcarriers or captioning in today's TV system. The initial design should include access features!

Most sincerely for now;



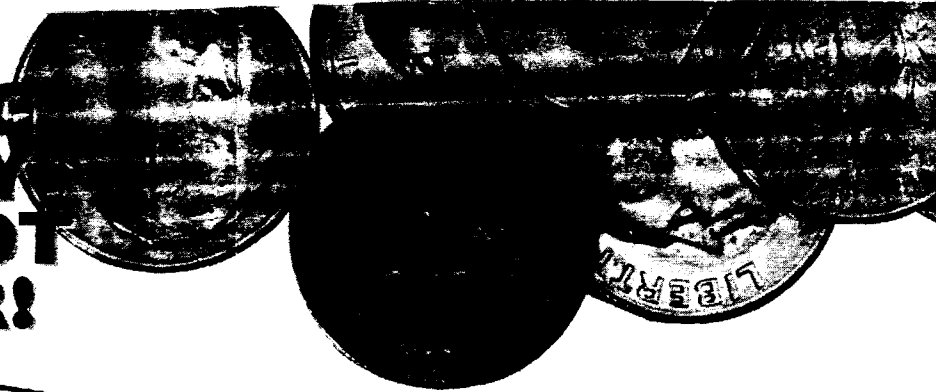
Jerome Torczyner, BSEE; 1061 Beachpark, Foster City, CA 94404

Att: VARTEC advertisement; (re: dime line & refund)

VARTEC telephone bill with excessive Directory Assistance charges.

**SAVING  
MONEY  
JUST GOT  
EASIER!**

**GUARANTEED!**



**Q: Do I have to sign up?**

**A:** No, you don't have to sign up. The DimeLine is easy to access because it is already available on your home telephone. All you have to do is **DIAL 10811 + 1 + Area Code + Number** you wish to call **ANYWHERE** in the United States for **10 CENTS A MINUTE**.



**Q: Do I have to cancel AT&T, MCI, Sprint or any other long distance carrier?**

**A:** Not at all! Just dial 10811 before every long distance call to get 10 cents a minute service on the DimeLine.

**Q: AT&T, MCI and Sprint say they have low rates. Why is the DimeLine better?**

**A:** AT&T, MCI and Sprint may offer you a good rate on the weekends or at odd hours. But only the DimeLine guarantees **10 CENTS A MINUTE, TO ANYWHERE IN THE U.S., 24 HOURS A DAY.\***

## The DimeLine Guarantee

For 10 cents a minute, 24 hours a day, 100% guaranteed using the DimeLine Service for calls within the U.S., VarTec Telecom will

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL:

**1-800-544-1510**

 **VarTec Telecom, Inc.**

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VT-R12

**1  
CALL**

**10  
CENTS PER MINUTE**

**100%  
GUARANTEED!**



**YOU GET 10 CENTS A  
MINUTE ON EVERY  
U.S. CALL!**

**DIME LINE®**

By VarTec Telecom Inc

Account Number  
415 [REDACTED]

Statement Date  
Aug 13, 1986

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Questions about your bill?

800-583-6767



Total Current Charges (See detail below)

\$9.93

Monthly Charges

Description	Amount
1. Universal Lifeline Telephone Service Surcharge	.03
2. Tax: Fed: .29 911: .01 Local:	.30

Total Monthly Charges

\$1.33

Calls

• Domestic

	Date	Time	Place and Number Called	Type	Rate	Minutes	Amount
3.	Jul 7	5:30pm	BOZEMAN MT [REDACTED]	Direct	Eve	3.0	.30
4.	Jul 7	5:57pm	BOZEMAN MT [REDACTED]	Direct	Eve	3.0	.30
5.	Jul 8	7:07pm	BOZEMAN MT [REDACTED]	Direct	Eve	3.0	.30
6.	Jul 11	6:49pm	DIR ASSIST 540 555-1212	Direct	Eve	1.0	.85
7.	Jul 17	6:52pm	BOZEMAN MT [REDACTED]	Direct	Eve	3.0	.30
8.	Jul 20	1:28pm	SACRAMENTO CA [REDACTED]	Direct	Night	3.0	.30
9.	Jul 21	2:35pm	SACRAMENTO CA [REDACTED]	Direct	Night	3.0	.30
10.	Jul 21	2:39pm	SACRAMENTO CA [REDACTED]	Direct	Night	3.0	.30
11.	Jul 26	6:54pm	BOZEMAN MT [REDACTED]	Direct	Eve	3.0	.30
12.	Jul 28	7:59pm	BOZEMAN MT [REDACTED]	Direct	Eve	3.0	.30
13.	Jul 31		DIME LINE 3 [REDACTED]				5.00
14.	Aug 4	1:59pm	DIR ASSIST [REDACTED] 540-1212	Direct	Night	1.0	.85
15.	Aug 4	2:01pm	ROANOKE VA [REDACTED]	Direct	Night	3.0	.30
16.	Aug 4	2:02pm	ROANOKE VA [REDACTED]	Direct	Night	3.0	.30
17.	Aug 4	2:03pm	ROANOKE VA [REDACTED]	Direct	Night	13.0	1.30
18.	Aug 7		MISC CREDIT				1.70

9.60

Total Calls

\$9.60